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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000212

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: MORE GOVERNOR CHANGES

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Classified By: DCM Christopher Dell for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

#### Summary

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¶1. (U) Since mid-December, four governors have been replaced. Torkyalai Weesa has replaced Rahmatullah Raufi in Kandahar; Mohammad Akbar Barakz has succeeded Abdul Ghafar Haqbin in Baghlan; Hamidullah Qalandarzai has been appointed to fill the job of Arsala Jamal in Khost; and Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani has just left Kabul to take over from Sayed Hosayn Anwari in Herat. Over 80 percent of Afghanistan's 34 governors have now been replaced over the course of the last two years. End Summary.

#### Herat

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¶2. (C) Herat province's awaited change at the top was announced on January 14 ) Dr. Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani is the new governor. Until about three months ago, Nuristani served as First Deputy Minister of Defense, a position he had held since 2005. He also worked as Minister of Irrigation, Water and the Environment under the transitional government following a stint as spokesman for the President. A native of Nuristan in Afghanistan's far northeast, the new governor has a master's and doctorate from the University of Arizona. According to an IDLG source, Nuristani's family resides in California. The same source notes that the new governor was chosen as the most qualified and with the hope that, with no membership in any of the vying tribes in Herat Province, he will be able to steer an objective course there. Nuristani replaces Sayed Hussein Anwari, who had been serving since June of 2005. In recent months Anwari had come in for criticism in the face of a deterioration in the security environment in and around the city of Herat. Since a personnel shakeup of the police initiated by Kabul in response to these security problems, the security situation has improved.

#### Kandahar

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¶3. (C) Nuristani is the latest in a series of recent changes in Provincial leadership. The most significant other change was in Kandahar, where former Governor Raufi announced on December 4 that he had been dismissed. This came less than four months after his appointment. A trusted inside source in the IDLG, speaking off the record, has confirmed suggestions that Raufi's departure was related to conflict with Provincial Council Chairman Ahmed Wali Karzai ) this despite assurances from the President at the time of Raufi's

appointment that he would receive presidential backing. Raufi was replaced in mid-December by Toryalai Weesa, an Afghan-Canadian. Weesa, a Pashtun (Mohammadzai), is a native of the Arghandab district of Kandahar and served as President of Kandahar University. He and his wife left for Canada in 1991. An agricultural expert, Weesa has been serving on the faculty of the University of British Columbia. He has reportedly been involved in pre-deployment training for Canadian forces. The IDLG reports that Weesa is a friend of the Karzai family.

Baghlan

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14. (U) Baghlan province has a new governor too ) Mohammad Akbar Barakzai. He replaced Abdul Ghafar Haqbin, who was dismissed as ineffective. The IDLG insists it tried to bolster Haqbin with outside resources but he simply did not respond. Barakzai, who just took up his position, is a former chief of staff at the Ministry of Interior. He is a native of Baghlan and a Pashtun and is a graduate of the province's agricultural technical college. Upon his taking up office, Barakzai declared that fighting narcotics and corruption would be priorities.

Khost

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15. (C) At the beginning of January Khost province finally received a replacement for Governor Jamal, who has rejoined his family in Canada. Former Deputy Communications Minister Hamidullah Qalandarzai, a Pashtun from Nangarhar Province, has now taken up his new duties. Qalandarzai is a former lecturer at Nangarhar University and has done development work throughout the country, though mainly in the south and

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west, during his tenure with NGOs. The new governor is reported to be a member of the Afghan Mellat Party led by Finance Minister Ahadi.

Comment

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16. (C) These most recent personnel actions increase by one in the Pashtuns, favor the Pashtun/non-Pashtun balance among the governors (Pashtun's hold more than half of the governorships). This comes against the backdrop of an overall marked increase over the last year in the number of Pashtun governors, something that has raised hackles among non-Pashtuns and reinforced the notion, true or not, that the Palace is making changes with an eye to the upcoming elections. Perhaps more noteworthy is the fact that these latest changes raise the percentage of governors changed over the last two years to over 80 percent. On the plus side, this reflects in part the efforts of the IDLG to improve the quality of leadership in the provinces. On the minus side of the ledger, however, is the cost in continuity. The frequent changes also highlight the challenges almost all governors face in trying to be effective in the face of central government control and the severe under-resourcing of governors and other institutions of sub-national governance. End Comment.

WOOD